

Guide for Host Parents and Families

■ **INTRODUCTION**

- Acting as a host to an overseas student can be an extremely rewarding experience for a family, giving it the opportunity to learn about the country from which the student comes as well as sharing the day to day experiences of the student during his/her stay in Australia.

■ **RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOST PARENTS**

- Hosting an overseas student presents important obligations.
- The Host Parent must –
- Care for the student and look after his/her well being in the same way as if the student was one of the Host Parents' own sons or daughters.
- Provide room and board for the student and include him/her in all the family activities.
- Monitor the student's school and leisure activities, ensuring that problems are recognised and minimised.
- It is desirable for the student to have a separate room of his/her own, or alternatively, to share a room with someone in his/her own age group.

■ **Host Parents :**

- Need not have children of similar age and sex as to that of the student. Many a successful hosting has occurred with families who have had young children, or no children.
- Need not be a Rotarian, however, it is essential for non-Rotary Host Parents to have been accessed and endorsed by the Host Rotary Club.
- The exchange is a two way process and the Host Parents are the adults in the deal. Host Parents should be willing to go more than half way in understanding the student. They should try to give an adult lead to the young person, who unless told cannot be expected to know the family's rules and wishes.
- Host Parents should expect the student to conform to their supervision, but to no greater extent than they expect of their own children. Host Parents should maintain a two-way communication between themselves and the student. Firm but sympathetic understanding and loving control from the Host Parents should lead to a hosting which is both successful and rewarding – and which will also happily add a son or daughter to the family.

■ **COUNSELLOR**

- The Host Rotary Club will appoint a Counsellor to look after the student's interest for the entire period of the Exchange. The Counsellor is virtually the student's guardian and the student should be encouraged to consult with the Counsellor on any problem that may arise and which requires help. The Counsellor is also available to assist Host Families with any problem they may encounter in hosting the student.

■ **THE STUDENT IS NOT A GUEST**

- It is most important that the Host Family does not treat the student as a special or honoured guest. The value of the Programme centres on the student being "one of the family" and not receiving any special favours or treatment. The student should contribute to the family life by undertaking normal chores.
- Similarly, the student should not address the Host Parents as Mr and Mrs, but as "Mum" and "Dad" or some other informal title such as christian names. To save any embarrassment, this matter should be resolved as soon as the student arrives in the family – refer to the Question sheet.

■ **HOUSEHOLD CHORES**

- The host student should assist with the household chores – making one's bed, keeping his/her room tidy, setting and cleaning away the meal table, assisting with the meal dishes etc.
- Students are not unpaid home help or
- live-in baby sitters, but on the other hand, they should not be excluded from household work – a correct balance should be established.

Guide for Host Parents and Families

■ **DISCIPLINE**

- The student is expected to adapt to the supervision and discipline of the Host Family – the family does not have to adapt to the student.
- Any sign of reluctance or unwillingness on the student's part to accept this requirement should be brought to the attention of the Counsellor, who should then clarify the point with the student. It is preferable that such a ruling comes from a third party (i.e. the Counsellor) rather than from the Host Parents. Problems can arise unless the student clearly understands that he/she is expected to conform to host country conditions. At the same time, however, Host Families should be aware of the problems of adapting and be understanding of the student.

■ **RELIGION**

- Religion seldom poses serious problems. Most usually accompany the Host Families to their church even where religions differ, but the issue should not be forced. If the student wishes to follow his/her own religion, the Host Family should respect the student's wish and be supportive in this respect.

■ **ALCOHOL**

- The consumption of alcohol can present a problem in two ways :-
- A student who has been accustomed to consuming liquor at home may be placed with a teetotal family. In such a case, the student must respect the wishes of that family.
- A student from a teetotal home may be hosted by a family where alcoholic drinks are regularly consumed. The Host Family should respect the beliefs/practices of the student and make no attempt to induce him/her to partake of alcoholic drinks.
- **Students are not permitted to consume alcohol in public places.**

■ **DRUGS**

- The possession and/or consumption of illicit drugs are a breach of the laws of Australia and as such are strictly prohibited under the Programme.
- Any student breaking this rule will be immediately expelled from the programme and repatriated.
- If Host Parents suspect that a student in their care is taking drugs they should immediately report their suspicions to the Counsellor who in turn should contact the District Committee and the Host Club President.

■ **DRIVING**

- Whilst on exchange, the student is specifically forbidden to drive any form of motorised vehicle, which has to be registered/licensed and/or the driving of, which requires a license. Many legal problems can arise should a student be driving such a vehicle and becomes involved in an accident. For safety reasons, students are not permitted to drive farm tractors. Violation of these rules can lead to the students being removed from the Programme and returned home.

■ **ROMANCE**

- The Youth Exchange Programme rules state that students should not become romantically involved with members of the opposite sex. This involves human relations and is not easy to enforce, but if Host Parents consider that such a relationship is developing, they should discuss the matter with the student and the student's Counsellor. It is a difficult matter, but the rule is sound, because a student romantically involved with another person centres all his/her attention and interest on that person to the exclusion of the broad aspects of the Youth Exchange Programme.

■ **PROMISCUITY**

- Promiscuity will terminate the Programme for the student leading to immediate return home.

Guide for Host Parents and Families

■ FINANCES

- The Host Family is not under any obligation to provide the student with pocket money or to finance clothing, school uniforms, travel or other expenses (including telephone calls). Pocket money will be provided each month by the Host Club, whilst the other costs are to be borne by the student from his/her own funds or those provided by the student's natural parents.
- Some students are poor at budgeting and need guidance in this respect if they are to live within their finances. Students should be discouraged from borrowing money and from purchasing on the Host Parents' credit accounts.
- The Programme requires the student to bring A\$500.00 to be placed in an Emergency Fund. The Fund is not for day to day minor items, but is for major expenditure such as clothing, medical and dental accounts, travel, tours etc. Withdrawals from the Fund should require the signatures of both the Counsellor and the student, thus preventing impulse buying. The Fund must be replenished without delay by the student's natural parents. Host Parents should discuss this matter with the Counsellor at the beginning of the hosting.

■ STUDENT INSURANCE

- It is mandatory for all students to have suitable and adequate insurance cover for the entire year covering the following risks :
 - Personal accident injury and/or death
 - Funeral expenses
 - Travel
 - Loss of personal belongings
 - Personal liability
 - Medical expenses
 - Hospitalisation
- Most sponsor countries require an exchange student to purchase that countries own local insurance and consequently, the student will arrive fully covered by insurance. The Host Club must check the adequacy of the insurance, and if considered to be inadequate, should contact the Host District Youth Exchange Committee to arrange additional cover. If the student has selected an Australian policy, the cover must be in effect PRIOR to the student's departure from his/her home country.

■ MEDICAL INSURANCE

- The Australian Government requires all hosted students to have basic insurance for medical and hospital expenditure. The insurance must be with Medibank Private under their "Overseas Student Health Cover". The policy will be effected PRIOR to the student's arrival since the issues of the Student Visa by the Australian Government are dependent upon the premium having been paid. Further cover may be added (again through Medibank Private) should the Club consider such action desirable. The hosted student is expressly excluded from cover under the MEDICARE national health care scheme.

■ TRAVEL

- Host Parents are under no obligation to take the student on holidays or provide tours. Where the Host Family is to be away and cannot take the student, they should advise the Counsellor well in advance of the event and the Counsellor should make alternative accommodation arrangements for the student covering the Host Family's absence.
- However, most students do manage to see a lot of their host country due to the generosity of their Host Parents, their Rotary Clubs and individual Rotarians. Where this occurs, it is an added advantage to the exchange, not an entitlement.
- Where the Host Club and District permit travel, the student must abide by the rules and regulations laid down as a condition for such travel, it is normal requirement for written approval to be sought from :
 - The student's natural parents
 - The Host Club
 - The Host Parents
 - The Host District Chairperson
 - School Principal, if absence from school is contemplated.
- A copy of the travel itinerary (including contact addresses and telephone numbers) must be lodged with the District Chairperson.

Guide for Host Parents and Families

■ **TRAVEL (CONT.)**

- Unaccompanied travel (even with other exchange students) outside the normal community area is not encouraged and is even strictly forbidden by the District.
- Under NO circumstances may a student make travel arrangements of one's own and then expect the Host Parents, Club or District to go along with the arrangements.
- Most Rotary Districts sponsor student exchange tours, the cost of which normally is the student's responsibility.

■ **SCHOOLING**

- Visa requirements and the rules of the Youth Exchange Programme require the student to attend a secondary school. The Host Counsellor should attend to the enrolment details and, in conjunction with the student, organise a subject package.
- The Host Counsellor is the continuing contact between the school and the Host Student. The Host Parent's role is to supervise the day-to-day attendance of the student at school and to encourage him/her to participate fully in both the academic and extracurricular activities of the school. It is important that any problems arising from language difficulties be dealt with promptly. The Host Parents explaining any absence of the student from classes should always provide a note to the school.

■ **HOMESICKNESS**

- Every student will experience homesickness to some degree. Host Parents should appreciate this fact and expect the student to have some adjustment problems. At this time a student may want privacy to cope with his/her feelings, so do not be alarmed if some time is spent alone in his/her room. Encourage the student to be open about homesickness and to be confident to discuss the problem when it arises.
- If the student spends a lot of time alone, this could be a danger sign that he/she is not adjusting well to the new environment. In an attempt to solve this problem it is wise for the Host Parents to discuss the matter with the Counsellor and the student. Encourage the student to be involved with youth groups and other community activities, as this will help alleviate adjustment problems.

■ **CHANGE OF HOST FAMILIES**

- Through the Counsellor, Host Families should keep in touch with the Rotary Club regarding hosting arrangements, so that all parties are aware of and know well in advance exactly when each change of home is to take place. It is recommended that the current Host Family meets with the next Host Family to discuss the student's likes and dislikes, thus assisting with a smooth transfer from one home to the next.

■ **TELEPHONE CALLS**

- Abuse of the telephone by the student can lead to conflict with the family. Upon moving into the Host home, the parents, should discuss telephone requirements with the student and establish operating rules. The cost of telephone calls should be borne by the student.

■ **SHARED KNOWLEDGE**

- Exchange of knowledge on an international level is one of the main objects of the Youth Exchange Programme. The Host student is an ambassador for his/her country. However, the Host Family also is an ambassador – for Australia. The Host should show interest in the student's country and learn as much as possible about that country. At the same time, the Host Family should also impart knowledge about Australia and its way of life, thus enabling the student to take back home a good understanding of Australia.